



## **Mass Ave/Appleton Design Review Committee**

Date: Monday, October 4, 2021

Time: 7:00 PM – 8:30 PM

Location: Conducted via Remote Participation

Members In attendance: Jeff Maxtutis, Phil Goff, Anne DiNoto, Christopher Tonkin, Daniel Amstutz (DPCD), Mike Rademacher (DPW), Linda Epstein, S. Nicholas Kriketos, Abbi Holt.

Others in Attendance: Alison Piasecki, Petru Sofio (MassBike), Thomas Proctor, Judith Proctor, Sandra Voss, Jayson Gauvin (Green International), Joe Solomon, Jane Foley, Tim Lawrence, Carol McDonald, Lenard Diggins, Brian Ristuccia, Kelvin Lam, Leonard Greenberg, Ali Carter (DPCD), Galen Mook (MassBike), Debbie Nowell, Mattie Railfaner.

### **Minutes.**

1. Welcome and Opening of Remote Meeting, including Ground Rules.

Daniel Amstutz explained that the Committee is meeting virtually to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. He noted the procedures that the Committee would follow to hold a virtual meeting. Governor Baker signed into law a bill which extends his Executive Order in response to the COVID-19 pandemic allowing virtual meetings, which suspended the usual Open Meeting Law requirement that a quorum of committee members be physically present in order to hold an official committee meeting. Amstutz confirmed the committee members in attendance for the meeting.

Amstutz went over the agenda and explained how committee and public comments would be handled. He noted some items that had been posted on the calendar page on the Town's website.

2. Approval of Minutes of May 27, 2021, and July 8, 2021.

Minutes were approved.

3. Summary of Events Since Last Meeting and Overview of Mass Ave/Appleton Area Parking Study.

Amstutz noted the goal for the meeting is to review the Modified Option 2 for short-term improvements developed by Green International and provide feedback to Green, the Town Manager, and the Select Board in advance of the Board meeting next week. He briefly summarized what had happened at the July 8 committee meeting and the events since then:

- a. July 8: the Mass Ave/Appleton Design Review Committee recommended Short-Term Option 2: Bike Lanes to the Select Board for approval.
- b. September 13: the Select Board was presented with Short-Term Option 1 (Shared Lanes) and Short-Term Option 2 for consideration to make changes to the Mass Ave/Appleton intersection and area. The Board decided to approve Option 1 and included a request for parking study of area as described in the report from the Department of Planning & Community Development (DPCD).
- c. After the September 13 meeting, the Town reached out to Green International to determine if another option could be developed to include bike lanes and fewer parking impacts, essentially combining elements of Option 1 and Option 2. Green International created a Modified Option 2 for the Board's consideration.
- d. On October 13 the Select Board will review Modified Option 2 to potentially supersede Option 1. Staff will also begin parking data collection for the parking study.

Amstutz explained how the parking study would be conducted. Staff will utilize the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) guidance about how to conduct a parking study and collect data. This is the same methodology that was used for looking at parking utilization for the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) pilot in East Arlington. The area that will be studied was defined in the report to the Select Board on September 13. It will include Mass Ave from Richardson Ave to Fessenden Road, and on-street public parking spaces less than a five-minute walk from the main commercial area on the north side of Mass Ave between Appleton Place and Forest/Burton Streets. Data will be collected during the week during the morning, afternoon, and middle of the day. Amstutz showed an example of the data collection done for the BRT pilot. He also showed an example of the spreadsheet provided as part of the MAPC guidance and a map of the area to be studied for this project.

Amstutz asked for feedback from the committee different aspects of the parking study, including times of day to study, days of the week to study, specific areas with high demand or illegal parking, and any other comments. Linda Epstein noted the weekend mornings seem to have high parking demand because of people accessing the laundromat and the veterinary clinic. Phil Goff asked if it would make more sense to focus on random times during the week as opposed to collecting data during the highest demand periods. Amstutz responded that the goal was to collect data during representative time periods to understand the fluctuation in use over a day and between days. The study should be balanced

and fair and not bias towards unusually high-demand or low-demand periods. Mike Rademacher suggested asking the businesses in the area what the highest demand periods are. Ali Carter noted she will be requesting this information shortly.

4. Review and Provide Feedback on Modified Option 2 for Green International and Select Board.

Amstutz said the Modified Option 2 proposal had been shared on the committee meeting's calendar page. The committee is being asked to provide feedback to the Select Board for their meeting next week where they will review and potentially adopt this option. Any suggestions or tweaks to the plan that Green International can make would be helpful. The committee does not necessarily need to change its original recommendation for Option 2. After the Board makes its vote the Town would implement the short-term option as soon as possible.

Amstutz noted that most of the bike lane accommodations in Option 2 are retained in the Modified Option 2. The primary difference is that parking is retained on both sides of Mass Ave between Appleton Place and Forest/Burton Streets, except for some strategic removals for visibility and safety. A bike lane is added on the eastbound side of this block, while the westbound side stays as a shared lane but with extra green-backed shared-lane markings. The travel lanes are also narrower. A bike lane picks up westbound towards Richardson Ave to connect to the existing bike lanes.

Jayson Gauvin from Green International noted that the parking on the south side of Mass Ave between Appleton Place and Forest Street/Burton Street is mostly retained in this option. The impacts to the parking supply in this area in the modified option are the same as in Option 1, which the Board previously approved. The narrowness of the road requires narrowing the travel lanes to accommodate a bike lane and a buffer between the bike lane and the on-street parking. Because of the presence of on-street parking it is likely that cyclists are already occupying in the middle of the lane as they travel through here; therefore the operations should not be much different to as they are today. Gauvin noted the bike lane crossing markings at the Leader Bank driveway. He said everything west of Appleton Street is essentially the same as Option 2. About seven parking spaces are put back on Mass Ave in this plan, reducing the parking impact to 15 spaces from 22 spaces in Option 2.

Goff asked for clarification on the seven parking spaces Gauvin mentioned. Gauvin explained that this is on the south side of Mass Ave between Appleton Place and Burton Street. About one space is removed by the crosswalk at Appleton Place for the bike lane and visibility. Driveways and hydrants prevent some parking in certain spaces on this side as well. He also noted the restricted parking on the north side of this segment by the crosswalk.

Jeff Maxtutis asked about the difference between the bike lane crossing markings on the eastbound and westbound sides. Gauvin said they are very similar, but the eastbound side has a shift to move cyclists away from the on-street parking. It is basically the same as what was shown in Option 2.

Epstein asked if there can be green pavement markings before the Appleton intersection on the eastbound side in the bike lane. There still may be shading in the bike lane from nearby trees. Gauvin said this can be added to the plan.

Anne DiNoto asked if it's possible to display exactly where the crash happened on the planview map. Did it happen right where the bike lane is, or more into the main travel lane? She also asked if the left turn from Mass Ave to Appleton Street is still being allowed. Finally, she said it would be better to frame the conversation about the plan as increasing safety instead of just losing parking spaces. Gauvin noted that APD is restricting left turns at certain times of day at this time. Left turns during other times of day are allowed. However, a long-term solution or permanent change has not been made at this time. Amstutz noted that APD is continuing the left turn restriction through this month, will stop the restriction during winter, and implement the restriction in March or April when afternoon solar glare becomes a major problem again. In terms of the location of the crash, the crash report is still wrapped up with the Middlesex Attorney General's office because it is a fatality, so we may not know the exact location until that is released. Amstutz agreed that the project could be framed better.

Goff asked if there was a specification for the flexible delineators in the road. Will they be individual posts or something more substantial? Mike Rademacher said DPW has been looking at different options. Getting something in stock has been an issue. They are looking at weighted options instead of something bolted to the ground to address winter operations. Goff said he appreciates the Town and Green International coming up with a create approach to the problem. The part west of Appleton Street is great. It is a tough decision, but he thinks if there is going to be a bike lane in one direction the eastbound side in the Appleton Place to Burton Street block is correct. He did recommend removing one more parking space by the crosswalk at Appleton Place to give more space for traveling cyclists and be safer overall.

Petru Sofio said he agreed with Goff about having the bike lane in the eastbound direction. He asked that another green-backed shared-lane marking ("sharrow") be placed at the end of the eastbound lane by Burton Street to make it clear there is a mixing zone there; he often turns left on a bike onto Forest Street to get to the Minuteman Bikeway. He noted that the eastbound bus stop by the Children's Room is used as a layover stop by buses waiting for students leaving Ottoson. A sharrow in the road there may be helpful. He also suggested a sign to say "right turn yield to bikes" at the Lowell Street intersection. Finally, he suggested looking at sharrows used on McGrath Highway with a modified sign as another version to design a safer facility. He thanked Gauvin for his work.

Amstutz noted he would check with the MBTA about the use of the bus stop for a layover.

Maxtutis asked for clarification about the parking restrictions at the crosswalk at Appleton Place. Is 25' restriction on the approach side and 10' restriction on the departure side standard practice? Gauvin said this was the Town standard as he understands it. Maxtutis asked about the placement of the Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacon proposed for the Forest Street/Burton Street intersection. Gauvin said the exact locations would need to be laid out in the field; they are not the final locations in these plans.

Tom Proctor thanked the Town and Green International for their work. He asked for further clarification about the logic around choosing which side of the street would have sharrows and which would have the bike lane. Gauvin said they wanted to retain the bike crossing at Appleton Street on the eastbound side because that is the main conflict area to address in this project. He had concerns about ending the bike lane at the intersection and the merge action that would have to take place just east of Appleton Place on the eastbound side. The shifting and merging would have been difficult due to the amount of traffic on the road among other issues. The speed of cyclists coming down the hill next to parked traffic was another concern.

Amstutz noted that there were some comments in the chat from two people who were in a crash at the Appleton intersection while they were biking through and they said they were right about in the green pavement marking area when the crashes occurred.

Brian Ristuccia said the modified option is an improvement and we shouldn't let the perfect be the enemy of the good. He remarked that additional centerline hardening on Mass Ave may be warranted to prevent fast, early left turns from Mass Ave onto Appleton Street.

Leonard Greenberg noted he was about halfway through the green pavement marking area shown on the plan when he was hit by a car last year. Anything to get people to slow down is needed. He noted that, as a cyclist coming down the hill, it can be hard to pay attention to what's happening on the right when you are also looking for hazards on the left. Reducing conflicts on the right side is very helpful. His crash and Charlie Proctor's crash seemed to be in almost the same place.

Galen Mook thanked staff for their work and how the options were presented at the previous Select Board meeting. He agreed with previous comments about creating more buffer space for the bike lane east of the crosswalk at Appleton Place was important. He suggested looking at MassDOT guidance. He also noted it could be ripe for illegal parking. He agreed that the centerline on Mass Ave could be hardened further with more or better-placed delineators. Finally,

one of the goals of this project is to slow down drivers. He said it should be considered as a 25 mile per hour speed limit if it isn't already, and have it posted as such. He also suggested narrowing the general travel lane widths in either direction. Gauvin noted that some Town staff had been concerned about narrowing the travel and parking lanes too much in the corridor, especially in the shared lane situation. That is why the travel was left at 12', but he can take another look at that. Amstutz added that the proposed speed feedback signs would also have the speed limit on it, at least the ones that he has seen. However, they will take longer to get implemented.

Goff asked if the business community had voiced any opinion about this modified option. Amstutz said he had not heard any opinion on it at this point. Goff asked for clarification about the process and if the Option 2 with bike lanes was still under consideration. Amstutz said Option 2 may still be possible but part of the problem that came out of the last Select Board meeting was the lack of information about the parking utilization and demand in the area. The main thing right now is to get something on the ground before the end of construction season. Getting the data and analysis done for the parking study wouldn't be completed for several more weeks. This Modified Option is the compromise to get something done sooner rather than later. Carter followed up on Goff's question regarding the business community to note she had sent an email to the entire Heights business community about this committee meeting. She said there will be additional follow up with businesses.

Sofio asked for clarification about the potential of implementing Option 2 next year. Amstutz said it could still happen, from what he understands. Sofio also noted some pedestrian signal lights were burned out. He also noted that it would make sense for the bike lane buffer to have hatch marks so it does not look like a double white line. He also suggested adding lights to some of the signs to make them more visible. Rademacher asked Sofio to email him about the maintenance issues.

Amstutz summarized the conversation that it appeared the committee was supportive of this Modified Option, and he will report that to the Board and Town Manager. People are also free to write their comments to the Board as well.

## 5. Next Steps.

Amstutz summarized the next steps:

- a. DPCD will transmit Committee comments to the Select Board and Town Manager.
- b. The Board will meet on October 13 to decide the final short-term design option.
- c. The Town will implement the striping and signage changes from the final option as soon as possible.

- d. DPCD will collect parking data for the parking study and will analyze and report out this information to the Board.
- e. The Town will determine the funding and timeline for a long-term design of changes to the intersection, including a traffic signal, potentially.

Amstutz noted it was not necessary for the Committee to vote on this option as the goal of the meeting was to get feedback from the committee to provide to the Select Board. The Committee can still say Option 2 is recommended, but this Modified Option is getting us closer to the Committee's preferred option.

6. Adjourn.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:22 pm.



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### Chat Recording

00:06:27 Petru Sofio (he/him): Abbi is on her way

00:09:33 Christopher Tonkin: I approve the minutes, CT

00:31:15 Abbi Holt: This option is Definitely better than no bike lanes though bikes are slower going westbound so that is actually where I would prefer to see a lane.

00:31:57 Petru Sofio (he/him): I actually disagree Abbi. If we switched the bike lane side we would lose the elephant foot + full green crossbike

00:32:32 Petru Sofio (he/him): It's not perfect, but I think it is better southbound. In a perfect world it would be on both sides.

00:38:03 Petru Sofio (he/him): I think they start mid March

00:39:18 Leonard Greenberg: I was the 2nd crash I know where I was

00:41:30 Leonard Greenberg: it was about 1/3 of the way down where the new green east side markings. I was told that charlies accident was in exactly the same space

00:43:00 Alison Piasecki: We were roughly in the same space, in the green, around where the beginning of the jut out is coming from the west

00:45:55 Tim Lawrence: Could you give it a bike box at the crosswalk?

00:46:02 Abbi Holt: Great point Petru

00:46:48 Linda Epstein: Petru brings up a good point at the Forest intersection



- 00:46:52 Phil Goff: Tim - a traffic control device--usually a signal--is needed to incorporate a bike box.
- 00:46:54 Jayson Gauvin: Bike boxes are only to be implemented at signalized intersections as they depend on stop and go operation
- 00:47:37 Tim Lawrence: Understood. Thanks for the clarification.
- 00:47:58 Brian Ristuccia: Petru's point about buses laying over around school dismissal time is important. See the starred entries on the MBTA 79 schedule.
- 00:50:01 Linda Epstein: Agree about Lowell signage too. Cars take this intersection at high speeds.
- 00:50:09 Petru Sofio (he/him): One last thing, I'd consider a buffer and maybe flexposts for that transition between the bus stop and the crossbike heading eastbound. That's an 8 foot bike lane, so there is plenty of space for a short protected lane. I'm worried cars will park there
- 00:51:58 Phil Goff: good idea.....or, if the revised version includes green pavement markings (suggested by Linda), that will help discourage parking too
- 00:57:16 Petru Sofio (he/him): Yes, I meant to point this out. Maybe one more post back would help.
- 00:59:22 Jayson Gauvin: The two posts were proposed in order to facilitate both left turns onto Appleton Pl but also left turns out of the leader bank driveway. One more post back towards Appleton St would make that left turn out of the leader bank driveway very difficult
- 00:59:54 Petru Sofio (he/him): Oh, I also meant to comment that the shared lane should be narrowed to 11'. This will allow us to have a full 3 foot door zone buffer on the south side.
- 01:02:23 Abbi Holt: I would like to second flexposts in the areas Galen mentioned.
- 01:04:43 Petru Sofio (he/him): It should be 25 now. I think a 20 safety zone would be even better
- 01:06:19 Petru Sofio (he/him): And to add a full 3' hatched buffer to the door zone on the south side

- 01:08:23 Phil Goff: ...or maybe 7'-wide T's and L's and a solid edge line 8' from the curb to slow traffic and create an extra door buffer
- 01:18:53 Christopher Tonkin: Do you think that we will need to have a vote on this plan?
- 01:21:18 Abbi Holt: Thanks Daniel!
- 01:21:25 Petru Sofio (he/him): Thank you!